

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05
CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07
INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06
OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 IO-13
NRC-05 /125 W

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P R 060948Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6721
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 4929

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ENRG, JA, US
SUBJECT: REPROCESSING DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TOKYO 4768

SUMMARY. OVER PAST WEEK, TOP GOJ LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED
CONCERNS OVER REPROCESSING ISSUE WITH STATEMENT GRADUALLY
MOVING TO PRIMIN FUKUDA'S VIEW THAT REPROCESSING ISSUE WILL
REQUIRE INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTION AND THAT WILL TAKE TIME.
MEANWHILE, MEDIA HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH SPECULATION OVER
ELEMENTS OF PENDING US NUCLEAR POLICY, WITH SOME SHARPLY
CRITICAL COMMENT ON US ACTIONS. ALTHOUGH PUBLIC CONCERN
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REMAINS GENERALIZED, QUESTIONS RELATED TO NPT
"GUARANTEES" AND JAPAN'S PERCEIVED LONG-TERM ENERGY
NEEDS ARE RECURRING. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING PAST WEEK REPROCESSING ISSUE REMAINED
A MAJOR ITEM OF MEDIA
ATTENTION AND JAPANESE CONCERN. INVOLVED WERE TOP

GOVERNMENT LEADERS, DIET AND MEDIA.

2. LEAD WAS TAKEN BY CIEENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGENCY DIRGEN (AND STATE MINISTER) UNO, WHO BRIEFED PRESS THAT HE HAD TOLD CHARG (DURING MARCH 29 MEETING) THAT APPARENT US OBJECTION TO JAPANESE REPROCESSING REFLECTS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING FOR JAPAN'S RESOURCE POVERTY AND "UNEQUAL" TREATMENT OF JAPAN. MEETING OF CONCERNED CABINET MEMBERS, HELD SAME DAY UNDER UNO'S CHAIRMANSHIP, DECIDED NOT ONLY TO SEND GOJ DELEGATION TO WASHINGTON BUT TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING SUPRAPARTISAN DIET MISSION TO DEMONSTRATE JAPAN'S CONCERN TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. LATTER PROPOSAL MET WITH OPPOSITION PARTY (CGP, JSP AND JCP) RELUCTANCE, HOWEVER, AND IDEA HAS APPARENTLY BEEN SHELVED FOR TIME BEING.

3. IN DIET INTERPELLATIONS DURING COURSE OF WEEK, UNO INSISTED REPROCESSING FACILITIES SHOULD BE PUT INTO OPERATIONS, SAYING JAPAN PLANS PRACTICAL USE OF FAST BREEDER REACTORS IN 1990'S AND PREPARATIONS MUST BE MADE NOW. LATER UNO SAID, HOWEVER, JAPAN WOULD POSTPONE SCHEDULED JULY OPERATION OF TOKAI MURA REPROCESSING FACILITY IF NO AGREEMENT WAS REACHED WITH US. (UNTIL THEN, GOJ HAD INSISTED FACILITY WOULD BEGIN ON SCHEDULE.) UNO MADE NEWS AGAIN APRIL 1 BY REPORTEDLY GIVEN FIRM PRE-DEPARTURE INSTRUCTIONS TO GOJ NEGOTIATING TEAM TO HOLD LINE ON GOJ POSITION, WHILE POINTING OUT "CONTRADICTIONS" IN US ARGUMENTS. IN FOLLOW-UP PRESS CONFERENCE HE SAID USG WOULD ANNOUNCE ITS DOMESTIC

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NUCLEAR POLICY APRIL 5 OR 6, PROBABLY INCLUDING FREEZE ON REPROCESSING AND DEFERRAL OF USE OF FAST-BREEDER-REACTOR TECHNOLOGY UNTIL TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. HE NOTED REPROCESSING ISSUE WOULD REQUIRE INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT AND INDICATED GOJ WOULD HOLD SECOND-STAGE NEGOTIATIONS WITH US AFTER INTERNATIONAL REACTION RECORDED.

4. PRIMIN FUKUDA TOOK FLEXIBLE STANCE. IN RESPONSE TO DIET QUESTIONER, PRIMIN SAID HE AGREED WITH PRESIDENT'S FEAR OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, BUT JAPAN MUST CONSIDER NUCLEAR ALTERNATIVE TO OIL AS ENERGY SOURCE, AND IT WOULD BE "VERY IMPORTANT" ISSUE IF JAPAN'S PEACEFUL NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM WERE OBSTRUCTED "IN AN UNEQUAL MANNER." THRICE DURING DIET INTERPELLATIONS FUKUDA STATED RESOLUTION OF REPROCESSING ISSUE WOULD REQUIRE INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION WHICH WOULD TAKE TIME, AND MATTER WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE CARRIED OVER TO LONDON ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN MAY. THESE

STATEMENTS TEND TO CONFIRM COMMENT OF CLOSE FUKUDA
AIDE TO EMBOFF THAT PRIMIN WOULD SEEK GRADUAL, MUTUALLY
SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF ISSUE OVER TIME, RATHER
THAN SUDDEN BREAKTHROUGH.

5. FUKUDA ALSO RELATED TO DIET COMMITTEE HIS VERSION
OF EXCHANGE WITH PRESIDENT ON REPROCESSING. ACCORDING
TO FUKUDA, PRESIDENT SAID THAT TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR
WEAPONS, HE WISHED TO CONTROL PLUTONIUM AND, TO DO SO,
ASKED WHAT FUKUDA THOUGHT OF COMPLETE ELIMINATION OF
REPROCESSING FACILITIES. FUKUDA SAID HE REPLIED THAT
JAPAN HAS DECLARED PUBLICLY IT WILL NOT POSSESS NUCLEAR
WEAPONS AND THERE IS NO FEAR THAT PLUTONIUM WILL BE
TURNED INTO WEAPONS. MOREOVER, JAPANESE ECONOMY NOW
RELIES GREATLY ON OIL BUT, WHEN OIL RESOURCES ARE
EXHAUSTED, JAPAN MUST TURN TO NUCLEAR FUEL. THEREFORE,
FUKUDA SAID HE COULD NOT AGREE IMMEDIATELY WITH
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PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL. PRIMIN THEN SAID HE ASKED
PRESIDENT WHAT HE WOULD DO ABOUT ALREADY EXISTING
REPROCESSING FACILITIES OUTSIDE US, TO WHICH PRESIDENT
REPORTEDLY REPLIED HE WOULD CALL UPON BRITAIN, FRANCE,
WEST GERMANY AND SOVIET UNION TO ELIMINATE THEM.

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

6. SPEAKING INFORMALLY TO A VISITING GROUP OF BROOKINGS SCHOLARS AND OTHERS APRIL 1, PRIMIN AGAIN PARAPHRASED POPULAR LOVE SONG, STATING HIS BELIEF THAT US AND JAPAN EXISTED FOR SAKE OF WORLD. HE THEN POINTEDLY ADDED THAT HE FELT REPROCESSING QUESTION COULD LEAD TO "LOVE SUICIDE" OF US AND JAPAN. SOME PEOPLE IN ROOM TOOK THIS TO MEAN CONSERVATIVE DEFEAT IN PENDING UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, BUT THAT WAS NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR FROM PRIMIN'S REMARKS. GROUP FUKUDA ADDRESSED, "JAPAN-US POLICY FORUM," CONCLUDED AFTER THREE-DAY MEET THAT INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS OF REPROCESSING ISSUE ARE URGENTLY NEEDED, AND THAT MATTER SHOULD BE SETTLED THROUGH OBJECTIVE STUDIES BY EXPERTS WITH CLOSE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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COMPLETE CONSULTATIONS ON TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL LEVELS. PARTICIPANTS THEMSELVES, HOWEVER, COULD REACH NO AGREEMENT ON ISSUE, WITH US SIDE ARGUING THAT PLUTONIUM USE AS ENERGY SOURCE BROUGHT UNACCEPTABLE PROLIFERATION DANGERS AND THAT REPROCESSING AND FAST-BREEDER REACTORS ARE NOT PRESENTLY ECONOMIC; JAPANESE DISAGREED.

7. FONMIN HATOYAMA'S ROLE HAS THUS FAR BEEN QUITE MODEST. RETURNING TO JAPAN FROM US AHEAD OF FUKUDA, HE DUCKED REPROCESSING QUESTIONS UNTIL PRIMIN GAVE LEAD. HE HAS THUS FAR MADE ONLY ONE SIGNIFICANT DIET RESPONSE ON ISSUE, AGREEING WITH OPPOSITION PARTY QUESTIONER THAT US STANCE WOULD VIOLATE NPT PROVISIONS (TOKYO 4586).

8. OVER PAST WEEK JAPANESE MEDIA HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH SPECULATION ABOUT PROBABLE ELEMENTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY AND, IN THEIR SELF-APPOINTED ROLE AS SPOKESMAN FOR PUBLIC, CRITICISM OF US POSITION. "HIGH USG OFFICIAL" HAS BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING REPROCESSING SHOULD NOT BE CARRIED OUT UNTIL SAFE, ECONOMIC, EFFICIENT METHOD IS DEVELOPED, AND MEDIA HAVE SPECULATED THAT US ENERGY POLICY WOULD INCLUDE INDEFINITE BAN ON REPROCESSING AND FAST BREEDER REACTOR RESEARCH.

PRESS CARRIED CHRISTOPHER TESTIMONY IN CONSIDERABLE
DETAIL. AT SAME TIME ASAHI'S WIDELY-READ "VOICE OF
PEOPLE" COLUMN APRIL 5 TOOK LINE THAT REPROCESSING WAS
ESSENTIAL TO MEET JAPAN'S FUTURE ENERGY NEEDS; TECHNO-
LOGICAL OR SAFEGUARD MEANS COULD BE FOUND TO PREVENT
PROLIFERATION; AND AMERICAN INITIATIVE REFLECTED ATTEMPT
TO MONOPOLIZE WORLDWIDE NUCLEAR ENERGY.

9. THERE IS ALSO RECURRING THEME IN MEDIA THAT
JAPANESE "INVENTION" OF CO-PROCESSING TECHNIQUE
(EXTRACTION OF PLUTONIUM AND URANIUM IN "MIXED" FORM)
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FOR REPROCESSING IS TECHNOLOGICAL FIX THAT SHOULD SUBDUE
US CONCERNS ABOUT SEPARATION OF PLUTONIUM AS WEAPONS-
USABLE MATERIAL. THIS SUBJECT WAS DORMANT FOR SEVERAL
WEEKS BUT NOW HAS CROPPED UP AGAIN.

10. COMMENT. JAPANESE PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT REPROCESS-
ING, ALTHOUGH SERIOUS, REMAINS GENERALIZED, BECAUSE
ISSUE IS COMPLEX AND BECAUSE US POLICY SPECIFICS HAVE
YET TO BE FORMALLY ANNOUNCED. NEVERTHELESS, CERTAIN
THEMES AND QUESTIONS ARE RECURRING. FOR EXAMPLE, HOW DOES US
PROLIFERATION CONCERN SQUARE WITH NPT "GUARANTEE" THAT
NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, SUCH AS REPROCESSING, WILL BE MADE
AVAILABLE TO NON-WEAPONS' STATES FOR PEACEFUL USES?
THIS WAS MAJOR ISSUE IN LAST YEAR'S JAPANESE DEBATE
OVER RATIFICATION OF NPT (AND IS CURRENTLY IN LOWER
HOUSE COMMITTEE DEBATE ON RELATED IAEA SAFEGUARDS
AGREEMENT), THESE GUARANTEES WERE STRESSED
REPEATEDLY BY GOJ IN PERSUADING THOSE OPPOSED TO CHANGE
THEIR MINDS. MOREOVER, HOW WILL JAPAN'S LONG TERM
ENERGY NEEDS BE MET? LARGE REPROCESSING FACILITIES
ARE BELIEVED ESSENTIAL TO MEET THESE NEEDS ALONG WITH,
EVENTUALLY, FAST-BREEDER TECHNOLOGY. THIS, MANY
JAPANESE BELIEVE, IS FAR MORE THAN PURELY ECONOMIC ISSUE,
IF QUANTATIVE LIMITS ON ENERGY SUPPLIES EMERGE. THERE
IS ALSO STRATEGIC FACTOR THAT REPROCESSING/FAST BREEDER
TECHNOLOGY WOULD AT SOME FUTURE DATE REDUCE JAPANESE
DEPENDENCE ON OVERSEAS SUPPLIES. THERE ARE ALSO FEARS
THAT, IF CONSTRAINTS ARE TO BE PLACED ON REPROCESSING,
JAPAN WILL NOT BE TREATED AS OTHER NPT SIGNATORIES,
INCLUDING WEAPONS STATES. THERE IS LASTLY PROBLEM
OF TOKAI MURA REPROCESSING FACILITIES THEMSELVES,
NOW NEARING COMPLETION AT A COST SO FAR OF TWO
HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS OR SO.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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